



A World of Knowledge

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Newton, NC 28658**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 30, 2007

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BIG Read: The show will go on

NEWTON—Doug Marlette's novel, "The Bridge" will remain the BIG Read selection for 2008. That decision was reached when partners for The BIG Read 2008 met recently to determine how to proceed after the untimely death of Marlette on July 10.

Plans were to bring the author to Newton next April to culminate the annual community-wide reading project, but the loss of Marlette has not changed the organizers' commitment to share the novel with local readers.

Karen Foss, director of the Catawba County Library System, said that the book was chosen because of its relevance to the area. Based on Marlette's own life, the novel unfolds as an extraordinary story within a story, as the lead character learns startling truths about himself and about the role his grandmother played in the General Textile Strike Of 1934.

"This book was our first choice back in January and remains so today," Foss said. "We will proceed and see this as an opportunity to pay tribute to Doug Marlette's talent."

She indicated that the Newton-Conover Performance Place remains booked for a BIG Read event on Saturday, April 19, though plans for that event are not yet defined.

Catawba County Library System is the lead agency for 2008, assisted by three partners—Lenoir-Rhyne College, Catawba Valley Community College and Hickory Public Library System.

Marlette, the Pulitzer-Prize winning cartoonist, died three weeks ago in a single-vehicle accident in Mississippi. At the time he was to meet with a high school troupe rehearsing to perform "Kudzu," a musical based on his syndicated comic trip by the same name.

That same musical is, in fact, scheduled for production in Newton by the Foard High School drama troupe next spring, Foss said.

A native of Greensboro, Marlette achieved world prominence through his career as a political cartoonist, and most recently, a novelist. The breadth of his career, particularly as it related to North Carolina during a stint with the *Charlotte Observer*, made him recognizable to local residents.

Marlette had won every major award for editorial cartooning including the 1988 Pulitzer Prize. He had also received the National Headliners Award for Consistently Outstanding Editorial Cartoons three times, the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Award for editorial cartooning twice, and was the first and only cartoonist ever awarded a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University. At the time of his death, he was on the staff of the Tulsa, Oklahoma *World*.

The Bridge, released in 2002, is the first novel selected for The BIG Read. Previous selections have been a story collection, *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien led by Lenoir-Rhyne in 2006 and a memoir, *The Color of Water* by James McBride, led by CVCC in 2007.

Catawba County Library System, based in Newton, operates branches in Claremont, Conover, Maiden, Sherrills Ford, St. Stephens and Southwest serving the Mountain View and Vale communities.

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